

**DATE:** Wednesday 16 March 2022

**TIME:** 13:00 – 14:30

**LOCATION:** SALC 10, Sherfield Building

## MINUTES

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### 1. Welcome and Apologies

#### Present:

Tianyu	Wen (TW)	RCSU Vice President – Welfare, Chair Department Academic Rep (Biochemistry), Life Sciences
Richard	Thompson (RT)	Vice-Dean (Education), Co-Chair
John	Seddon (JS)	Faculty Senior Tutor
Matt	Horsfield (MH)	Education Support Coordinator (Secretary), FoNS
Don	Craig (DC)	Director of UG Studies, Chemistry
Chris	Hallsworth (CH)	Director of UG Studies, Mathematics
Huw	Williams (HW)	Director of UG Studies, Life Sciences
Carl	Paterson (CP)	Director of UG Studies, Physics
Amelia	Barron (AB)	Student Experience Officer, Chemistry
Inkeri	Hibbins (IH)	Undergraduate Liaison Officer, Mathematics
Krzysztof	Oliwa (OK)	Department Academic Rep, Chemistry
Priscilla	Yip (PY)	Department Academic Rep, Mathematics
Erica	Zhao (EZ)	Department Academic Rep (Biological Sciences), Life Sciences

#### Apologies:

Daniel	Lo	ICU Deputy President - Education
Aparna	Pillai	RCSU President
Rebecca	Middleton (RM)	Faculty Education Manager, FoNS
Yasmin	Andrew (YA)	Student Liaison Officer, Physics
Nicolas	Barykin Pankevich (NBP)	RCSU Vice President – Education, Chair
Graeme	Rae	Faculty Operating Officer, FoNS
Steve	Connolly (SC)	Undergraduate Liaison Officer, Life Sciences
Stefano	Fiocca (SF)	Department Academic Rep, Physics

## 2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the previous meeting held on 10 November 2021.

## 3. Matters arising from the minutes and review of action tracker

The action tracker was reviewed, and actions were marked as complete.

## 4. Reports from Department Student Representatives:

### 4.1 Chemistry

The detailed report document was noted by the committee and OK presented the key matters arising from the report.

- The students in the Department have raised no concerns since the last SSC and teaching was progressing smoothly. The Department had informed the students that the exams would be online, in the timed remote assessment (TRA) format, and there have been no complaints.
- OK noted the student reps were organising a dinner for the final year students in June. OK thanked the Department for contributing to the funds and this will make the overall cost cheaper for all students.
- OK explained to the committee that he was keen to encourage more student-to-student interactions and provide a platform for final year students to give advice to other students. Last year, the student reps had organised talks about elective modules and final year projects, and they were keen to organise this again.
- At the last Departmental SSC, there was more positive feedback than negative feedback about the use of hybrid learning this year. The Department had explained to the student reps that the funding rules for UROP had changed and the College does not allow non-funded projects. OK noted there was some concern about this, but overall students were pleased that all projects were going to be paid for and the number of projects shouldn't be impacted.
- OK noted that students in the Department were keen for Covid-19 testing to continue at the College and students felt safer coming into campus. The committee discussed that the College was currently continuing to offer tests up to Easter but would stop after then.  
**Action 3: RT to find out if Covid-19 testing will be offered after the Easter break.**
- OK noted that the student reps have suggested improving lecture audio quality for next year.

### 4.2 Life Sciences – Biochemistry

The detailed report document was noted by the committee and EZ presented the key matters arising from the report.

- The student reps were working on a wellbeing booklet/website for students to access in the Department.
- EZ noted there have been a number of events organised by both the BioSoc and BioChemSoc. The students have used the common room to host screenings of the David Attenborough documentary.
- EZ noted there been candidates nominated for the Departmental rep in the upcoming ICU elections.
- Students have expressed positive feedback about the recent town halls meetings, where students have been able to ask questions directly to senior staff in the Department.
- EZ explained that they were working on an assessment feedback portfolio to improve the feedback students get after an exam.

- The wellbeing reps were looking at ways to improve the personal tutoring in the Department and improve the relationship between personal tutors and students. EZ suggested maybe more in person sessions should be organised.
- At the last Department SSC, the committee discussed assessment feedback, assessment deadlines which had been moved to reading week and organising more revision sessions ahead of the summer exams. HW noted that a coursework deadline should not be set in reading week but there might have been an exceptional reason for why the deadline had been moved to that week.

#### 4.3 Life Sciences – Biological Sciences

EZ and TW noted the report for both routes in Life Sciences was the same.

#### 4.4 Mathematics

No detailed report document was received. PY presented a verbal report of the key matters arising in the Department.

- The Department have submitted a proposal for funding from the Student Shapers project to look at curriculum mapping. Hopefully this should encourage more collaboration between staff and students.
- PY noted that the Maths society were keen to organise an informal module fair later in the year to help students pick their modules.
- There have been more social events this term, with the MathSoc dinner this week.
- The vacant student rep positions in third and fourth year had now been filled.
- PY explained that the student reps had helped CH review the assessment calendar to resolve the number of timetable clashes and assessment clashes. The students were grateful for this and appreciated being heard by the Department.
- PY explained that the Department recently informed all the students that the exams were moving to the TRA format. PY noted some students were disappointed but overall students understand why this decision was made by the Department. CH noted that the Department are planning for in person exams in 2022/23, but with an open book format.
- The committee talked about the decision to move exams online in the Department and CH explained that the Department had listened to student opinions but there were also logistical challenges they needed to solve. PY explained the student reps had carried out a survey to see if students preferred in person or online exams. TW queried if the survey had anonymous results as some students might be nervous to voice their opinion. PY confirmed the survey was anonymous and the results were mixed. OK noted that only one student in Chemistry had requested in person exams for this year. IH noted that students on a tier 4 student visa had to remain in the country for their visa to be valid over the summer exam period.
- PY explained that the student reps have agreed with the Department where the USS strike funds should be allocated. The money will be used for:
  1. £5 meal voucher or printing credit
  2. Hardship fund
  3. UROP funding
- CH noted that the Department have not received the results from the Autumn Module Evaluation Questionnaire (MEQ) and did not know when the spring MEQ would be released.

**Action 4: RT to follow this up with the Deputy Director (Academic Quality and Standards)**

#### 4.5 Physics

No detailed report document was received. SF was not present at the meeting.

### 5. Standing Items

#### 5.1 Curriculum Review (CR)

- **Chemistry** – DC noted the Department recently submitted paperwork to the FoNS Education Committee to make some changes to the new fourth year modules which will start in October 2022. Paperwork had also been submitted as part of the re-accreditation to the Royal Society of Chemistry.
- **Mathematics** – CH noted there are some new modules coming for next year, which the Department were excited to teach. There were ongoing talks about final year projects and reviewing how the projects are allocated, taught, and moderated. CH was keen to carry out some evaluation next year, post CR, to review the assessments and reduce any over workload in the new CR modules.
- **Physics** – CP noted that the Department were making some minor modifications to the new modules in fourth year and were looking at moving some modules to a different term. CP agreed with CH that some new modules had caused additional assessments which might not be required and would review this over the summer. The Department had recently updated their lab assessments and feedback so far seemed to be positive. CP noted the Department had also submitted their paperwork for their re-accreditation to the Institute of Physics. The committee talked about examples of good practice when a module is assessed by 100% coursework. RT noted that it is important for the Departments to balance these modules alongside those modules which have a major exam at the end of term. IK queried if there was going to a review of the i:Explore modules and how they are run. She noted that a number of students in the Department were not engaged with the module they had picked. The committee noted that the i:Explore option does not count to the overall degree award but it does count to the credits required to be awarded. The other Departments noted that they had not seen an issues with their students on the i:Explore modules. The committee talked about the option for this module to be compensated at the end of year exam board. DC noted that this was the first year Chemistry was using the i:Explore option for their BSc students and it would be good to confirm if the module can be compensated or not.  
**Action 5: MH to check with the Quality Department if the i:Explore module can be compensated.**
- **Life Sciences** – HW had no updates.

#### 5.2 Feedback on Assessment

- Nothing to be raised, discussed in earlier action points.
- HW noted that the Department were re-starting their traffic light system for coursework returns. This has been paused in the pandemic as students and staff were not coming into campus.

#### 5.3 NSS Action Plans

- Nothing to be raised, discussed in earlier action points.

### 6. Chair's business

- TW had nothing further to raise.

**7. Minutes of Departmental Student Staff Committee Meetings (to note)**

- Minutes noted.

**8. Any other business**

- IH noted that she recently attended a College presentation with the President of Harvard University and noted it was a positive experience and great to see staff members and students from across the College coming together. She explained, she would like to see more of these events organised in the future. RT queried if talks are organised by the Head of Department at the moment, and IH confirmed this was not happening. AB noted that in Chemistry, the Head of Department often comes to student talks.

**9. Dates of Future Meetings**

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Teams/ Room Details</b>	<b>Paper Deadline</b>
FoNS - UG Academic Student Staff Committee	15/06/2022	12:30 - 14:00	SALC 10, Sherfield	08/06/2022